

## Remembering Muhammad Anwar Shaheed

Talk at the UK Lahore Ahmadiyya Centre, Wembley, 3rd April 2016

by Zahid Aziz



Left and below: Muhammad Anwar Shaheed



It was decided by our *Jama'at* last year that the Sunday Meeting in April should be named after our late Imam, Mr Muhammad Anwar, who was martyred on 9th April 1986 while visiting the country of Guyana to attend an international convention of our *Jama'at*. I begin by reciting the following verses of the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
أَمْوَاتٌ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَ  
الشَّرِّ ط وَبَشِيرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ  
مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

“O you who believe, seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allah is with the patient. And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. Rather, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive. And We shall certainly try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits. And give good news to the patient, who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: Surely we are Allah’s, and to Him we shall return. Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord; and those are the followers of the right course.” (2:153–157)

The expression “Surely we are Allah’s, and to Him we shall return” is recited at someone’s death. But in the Quran it has been related particularly to the suffering of any kind of loss in the way of Allah. Everyone suffers these kinds of losses, and it is sad in all cases, but those who strive in the way of Allah are by their own choice undertaking more loss than others. Muslims, when persecuted at Makkah, could have chosen to recant their faith, or after their migration to Madinah they could have refused to defend themselves and surrendered to the Quraish. By adhering to Islam when at Makkah, and by agreeing to fight in order to maintain their religious freedom when at Madinah, they put themselves in the way of suffering loss. The Quran records that their unbelieving relatives said about them:

“If they had been with us, they would not have died, or been killed” (3:156).

Their opponents did not have anything against them personally. No one hated the Prophet Muhammad or Hazrat Abu Bakr as individuals. They were against their beliefs and religion. By trying to kill them they were trying to kill Islam. This is why the Quran says, as quoted above: “And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. Rather, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive”. They cannot be called dead because the religion they were defending was still alive.

The Quran also says: “O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah, as it ought to be kept, and do not die except as Muslims.” (3:102)

How can we be ordered not to die when dying is not in our control? The meaning is that we are told to lead such lives that whenever death comes upon us, which we don’t know when, it finds us in a state of obedience to God. If God causes a person to die when that person is working in God’s way, then it is a judgment by God on the high spiritual rank of that person, for everyone in this world to see. The Holy Prophet Muhammad said:

“He who is killed in the way of Allah is a martyr; he who dies a natural death in the way of Allah is a martyr; he who dies of the plague (in the way of Allah) is a martyr; he who dies of cholera (in the way of Allah) is a martyr.”<sup>1</sup>

The word for ‘martyr’ in Arabic is *Shaheed*, which means a witness. One who devotes his life to the cause of Islam so that even at the time of his death, by whatever means it comes, he is working for that cause, is himself a witness and an evidence to the truth of Islam.

As regards those who die a natural death, or from some illness, during a period of life when they were engaged in the service of Islam, it can be said that they died during a part of their life when they were in a state of submission to Allah. But as to one who is murdered because of his devotion to Islam by an enemy, he was in a state of submission at the very moment of his death.

At the very moment of being struck down by the enemy, he was an obstacle to the evil design of the enemy and (whatever he may have been doing at that moment) he was a symbol of service to Islam, whom the enemy felt had to be removed out of the way. Thus such a person is granted the highest spiritual rank by Allah in the next world.

Looking at the above hadith, if a person deliberately made himself catch plague or cholera, and died, would he be a martyr? Obviously not. It should happen to him by means outside his control. Similarly, a person who brings death upon himself, who presses the button or ignites the device which causes his death, cannot be a martyr. And if he aims to kill innocent people by his own death, then he is dying in a state of gross disobedience to Allah.

In many hadith, the *Shaheed* are classified with the prophets, and even have precedence over prophets in how soon they reach heaven. The Holy Prophet was once asked, “Who will be in paradise (*jannah*)?”. He replied: It will be prophets, the *Shaheed*, children who died (this applies to all humans), and those who were buried alive.<sup>2</sup>

It is also in hadith that the *shaheeds* are of different ranks in the hereafter, some higher than others, depending on their level of faith and good qualities in the lives they led before being martyred.<sup>3</sup> It was also said by the Holy Prophet that if someone has the desire to be a *Shaheed*, then even if he dies in his bed at home, he is a *Shaheed*.<sup>4</sup> Presumably, such a person will be leading a very righteous life in his aim to become a *Shaheed*. So even without being killed, he is a *Shaheed*.

The Holy Prophet has ruled out that someone who is a hypocrite can become a *Shaheed* even by fighting in the way of Allah and being killed.<sup>5</sup> The same applies to anyone who fights for some worldly reward, or to achieve fame, or to boast of his exploits, or for his tribe and country, and not in the way of Allah.<sup>6</sup> If he is killed, he is not a *Shaheed*.

A man asked the Holy Prophet if his sins will be forgiven if he were killed in the way of Allah. The Holy Prophet at first replied, Yes, his sins would be forgiven provided that he was patient and sincere in the undertaking to fight in the way of Allah. Then he asked him to repeat the question. When the man repeated the question, the Holy Prophet gave the same reply but added: “except the sin of leaving a debt”.<sup>7</sup> It looks as if that man owed a debt to someone, and the Holy Prophet reminded him that if he went to fight, without discharging the obligation of repaying his debt, and is killed, Allah will not forgive him the sin of neglecting this duty.

It is clear therefore that martyrdom cannot be achieved by anyone by the mere, single act of being killed, but it requires leading a righteous life and dying in that state. In the Quran, where it says, “Surely Allah has bought from the believers their persons and their property — theirs (in return) is the Garden” (9:111), it describes such believers as follows:

“They who turn to Allah, who serve Him, who praise Him, who fast, who bow down, who prostrate themselves, who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and who keep the limits of Allah — and give good news to the believers.” (9:112)

Drug dealers, smugglers, and the like, who suddenly discover religion one day, and the only thing they then do in the name of Islam is to commit some atrocity, are far, very far, from fulfilling the above criteria.

Thirty years ago, martyrdom was a very rare occurrence. Today we find that, for example in Pakistan, dozens of people are killed in a single bombing incident and they are described as martyrs in the news. There was the Lahore tragedy of only a week ago, on Easter Sunday. No doubt these are very sad, tragic and distressing deaths of innocent people — may Allah have mercy on them all. But, if we want to be realistic and level-headed, it doesn't mean that they acquire the high spiritual status of martyrs who made all kinds of sacrifices for Islam during their lives, so much so that their lives ended on a note of sacrifice. And those who kill these ordinary members of the public by blowing themselves up are also declared as martyrs by their supporters. It would be infinitely better if the so-called martyrs on both sides, i.e. the perpetrators and the innocent victims, had remained alive and were just ordinary Muslims.

The Quran says:

“And those who flee in Allah's way and are then slain or die, Allah will certainly grant them a goodly sustenance. And surely Allah is the Best of providers. He will certainly make them enter a place which they are pleased with.” (22:58–59)

Those who flee in Allah's way were those who, for the sake of upholding Islam, left their homes where they were persecuted and went elsewhere. If they suffer death as a result of this, Allah promises them a spiritual sustenance in the afterlife. Fleeing or migrating in Allah's way also includes going to other lands to spread the message of Islam. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wrote in a book in 1894:

“He who goes to the Western countries purely for the sake of Allah to preach Islam, he will be one of the righteous ones, and if he meets with death there he will be from among the martyrs (Shaheed).”<sup>8</sup>

We didn't come to Western countries “purely for the sake of Allah”; primarily it was for better education and careers. But our missionaries did come purely for the sake of Allah, people such as Dr Abdullah and Mr S.M. Tufail, who died here. And so did Mr Anwar, who went even further West from here to Guyana and was killed there.

Mr Anwar was not born into the Ahmadiyya Jamaat. After his early education he joined the education department of his province, then known as the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. Out of his own interest, he also read Ahmadiyya literature given to him by some Ahmadi relatives. Impressed by the literature and by the character of the Ahmadis whom he knew, he joined the Jamaat. In this he faced opposition from his close relations. He continued his studies while in employment, and eventually was promoted to become Headmaster of a government high school. During the 1974 anti-Ahmadiyya riots in Pakistan, he and Mrs Anwar suffered loss of much household property which was looted and burnt by the rioters.

In 1979 Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan sahib asked Mr Anwar to devote his life for the service of Islam and he agreed. Initially he took long-term leave from his job. After a year's missionary training in Lahore in 1980, he came here to London as our Imam with Mrs Anwar in March 1981. After this centre at Wembley was purchased, Mr & Mrs Anwar moved into it in 1982. At the end of his long-term leave from his post in Pakistan, he resigned his job to continue serving this Movement as our Imam in the UK.

Here we witnessed that he had devoted his life to the cause of Islam, through the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, and he bore cheerfully, without the slightest complaint, all sorts of hardships in the conduct of his mission. Day in and day out, he was engaged in a struggle in the way of Allah, working with the utmost humility. We remember how Allah's name and His praise were ever on his lips, and his prayers were sincere, humble and charged with spiritual life. He was a deeply Godly man.

Doing his duty, Mr Anwar went with other Lahore Ahmadiyya delegates to attend our convention in Georgetown, Guyana in 1986. After the convention had been concluded, and a few delegates from abroad were still there, he was murdered by an assassin, *inna li-llahi wa inna ilai-hi rajjioon*. The assassin believed that by this vile and inhuman act, of shedding the blood of a wholly innocent and harmless person, he was performing a service to Islam. This violent extremism, uncommon at that time in 1986, then grew and grew to engulf almost the whole world, affecting most of all Muslim countries themselves. I conclude by saying that if you ignore victims of injustice because you don't happen to like that particular group, or you think they are small and unimportant, so what does it matter if they suffer, or you have the attitude of appeasement, namely, that the perpetrators of injustice will be mollified if you offer them a few victims, so that they will not come after you, then one day you will find that you also are a victim.

Let us pray that may Allah accept the struggles, services and sacrifices of Muhammad Anwar *Shaheed*, and raise him to the highest ranks in the after-life, may Allah grant perseverance to

his bereaved relatives and widow, and ever protect them, and may Allah enable us to take him as our model and example — *Ameen*.

From:

[www.ahmadiyya.org/islam/intro.htm](http://www.ahmadiyya.org/islam/intro.htm)

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<sup>1</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, Book of *Imarat*, ch. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Abu Dawud, Book of Jihad.

<sup>3</sup> *Tirmidhi*, Book: Virtues of Jihad, ch. 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, Book of *Imarat* (Leadership or Government), ch. 46.

<sup>5</sup> *Mishkat*, Book of Jihad, Section 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, Book of *Imarat*, ch. 42, 43.

<sup>7</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, Book of *Imarat*, ch. 32.

<sup>8</sup> *Nur-ul-Haq*, Part 2, p. 55.